

P2 Yes, we can:
Youth Entrepreneurship Strategies

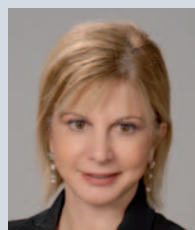
P4 Entrepreneurial vision:
Nordland and Baden-Württemberg

P5 Linked in:
the Eurodyssy programme



EDUCATION FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Editorial



With youth unemployment at more than 20% in the European Union (EU) and governments struggling to cope with the ongoing debt crisis, Europe's young people face some tough challenges in entering the job market. The employment landscape is changing, and as structured job opportunities decline we must equip young Europeans with the entrepreneurial and social skills that can set them apart from their competitors. Entrepreneurship education is about training young people in the business competencies and personal qualities needed to create and run an enterprise.

The EU has recognised the importance of education and youth, which feature prominently in Europe's 2020 economic vision. Indeed, Europe 2020 promotes training policies and entrepreneurship as one way of reducing youth unemployment. Cohesion policy post-2013 must also recognise the importance of improving business opportunities for young people in their home regions.

AER believes in young people, and the important role they play in Europe's economic and social wellbeing. As such, regional leaders have been working hard to promote initiatives – including the YES project and the Eurodyssy exchange programme – which will help provide young people gain the business acumen and professional experience that is so crucial in today's tough job market.

But a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. Different parts of Europe are subject to varying challenges and opportunities. This is just one reason why Europe's regional leaders must share best practice, adapting to their own conditions to make the most of their unique potential. |

Hande Özsan Bozatlı

President of AER's 'Culture, Education, Youth and International cooperation' Committee
Vice-President of Istanbul Provincial Council (TR)

Knowledge transfer

The EU is becoming increasingly aware of the importance of education for entrepreneurship



Young "Eurodyssians" at work

Creativity, knowledge and innovation are just some of the buzzwords associated with entrepreneurship. If Europe is to foster growth in these areas, it will need to tap into the potential of young people – the entrepreneurs of the future. Entrepreneurship education – teaching young people the skills they need to flourish as innovators – is an important tool to ensure this happens.

The EU's Oslo agenda for entrepreneurship education aims to promote entrepreneurial mindsets by encouraging national and regional governments to support entrepreneurship education. Ideas, which can be adapted and applied at regional level, include integrating entrepreneurship in school curricula and providing support to schools and teachers. Through building links between schools, businesses, and local authorities, the programme gives young people the chance to create their own "summer jobs", helping them to develop enterprise skills and earn money from their own ideas and initiatives.

2020 vision

Europe 2020 – the EU's blueprint for creating smart, sustainable and inclusive growth – says that education and training policies are crucial to help Europe towards its 2020 goals. It contains several initiatives to this end, including the 'youth on the move' which promotes, among others, informal learning to boost the entrepreneurship opportunities for young professionals. According to the strategy, smart growth can only be secured by combining education programmes with "entrepreneurship, finance, and a focus on user needs and market opportunities".

The reform of cohesion policy post-2013 provides policymakers with the opportunity to boost economic development at the regional level. As the AER position paper on cohesion policy says, Europe will only recover from the crisis and create a sustainable economy able to compete in a globalised market if it makes the most of the human and physical capital contained in the regions. |

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YES, we can

The YES project aims to promote entrepreneurship in the education system

YES

Youth Entrepreneurship Strategies

Six regional governments, a national youth entrepreneurship organisation and the AER are working to increase the number of entrepreneurs and boost Europe's competitiveness. A 2007 Eurobarometer survey showed that entrepreneurship is not a preferred career option for most Europeans, with 60% saying that setting up a business had never occurred to them. But as the job market changes, and citizens struggle to cope with rising unemployment and job insecurity, it is becoming increasingly important to equip young people with the skills they need to stand out from the crowd.

Studies show that the education system is the perfect platform for raising awareness and providing training for budding entrepreneurs. The YES project works on this premise, recognising the link between education and entrepreneurship as highlighted in the EU's Small Business Act (SBA) and Oslo agenda.

Building bridges

Based on pooling and sharing experiences, YES seeks to spread the lessons learned and good practice gained by mapping and analysing youth entrepreneurship strategies in the partner regions. It was developed to provide a fresh perspective on youth entrepreneurship strategies, promoting youth entrepreneurship in regional development policies, growth and innovation plans and the education system. It will work by influencing policy at regional level, to help put entrepreneurship on the agenda as local development plans, growth and innovation plans and school plans are developed. The end result will be one national and six regional action plans to help boost the number of entrepreneurs and small and

medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in each region, but also the production of a best practice guide.

The project is in line with the overarching EU business strategy, with the European Commission having used the SBA to urge member states to stimulate innovative and entrepreneurial mindsets among young people by introducing entrepreneurship as a key competence in the school curriculum. *"The aim of the project is to contribute to European competitiveness and accelerate regional economic growth through promoting the entrepreneurial mindset in the next generation,"* says the project document. *"The project originates from the regional need to absorb new knowledge and inspiration on youth entrepreneurship strategies."* The European Council also specifically highlighted the need to promote entrepreneurship among young people in the European youth pact, adopted in March 2005.

And the project objectives chime well with the Europe 2020 strategy, the EU's economic reform package, which seeks to generate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and cut unemployment.

Getting Europe working

Mathieu Mori, senior policy coordinator at AER's 'Culture, Education, Youth and International cooperation' Committee, said entrepreneurship education could help tackle youth unemployment, currently estimated to stand at about 21%. Entrepreneurship education could trigger career ideas by increasing awareness, promoting skills and giving practical support to young people, especially those who may not feel they have the "profile" to take up business opportunities, he said. Mori acknowledged that it may be difficult to integrate education for entrepreneurship into the school system, with limited resources and teachers already under significant time pressure. But he adds that entrepreneurship education should be seen as an opportunity to provide young people with the skills they need to cope with the impact of the recession. *"Entrepreneurship education is one way of fighting youth unemployment. It's only one way but it's an important one,"* he said. *"We must convince regional governments to introduce entrepreneurship education in the school curricula. There is an economic crisis and unemployment is high, so if we're trying to rationalise what we're teaching this would be a good topic to promote."*

"Entrepreneurship education is one way of fighting youth unemployment."

Indeed, Europe will only meet its goal of 75% employment if the institutions, member states and regions work together to tap into the entrepreneurial potential of its young people. As the institutions closest to the people, Europe's local and regional authorities have a crucial role to play in this. The regions must be on board in supporting the next generation of businessmen and women, working in partnership to share best practice and deliver practical solutions to increase entrepreneurship in the EU. |

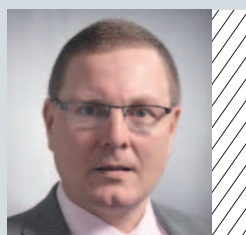


AER members are encouraged to contribute to a questionnaire, which will inform a best practice guide on entrepreneurship education to be published at the end of 2012.

Best practice

—Interview

AER regions look at what the YES project is doing to help young Europeans in a straitened economic environment



Kari Hietala

Special Advisor in International and EU affairs at the Pori Regional Development Agency in the Satakunta region, **Finland**

AER: How does the YES project support young entrepreneurs?

KH: The YES project will help increase young people's creativity, responsibility and social skills, whether they end up as entrepreneurs or employees in their professional lives. It will also lead to a broader understanding of entrepreneurship education (EE), increase awareness of EE and recognise its meaning and significance in the economy and society more broadly. It is important to emphasise the political commitment on a national and regional level to ensure effective EE policies.

AER: What role do the regions have in boosting business development?

KH: Regions have a crucial role in this. It is up to regions to ensure a competitive and business-friendly environment for companies to operate in, especially for SMEs. This is particularly important bearing in mind that there are roughly 23 million SMEs in the EU, accounting for more than 95% of companies and two-thirds of jobs and GDP. Regions must also provide support services for companies covering widely the whole business life cycle. And they have an important role to play in supporting entrepreneurship education, training and business start-up services to help new firms grow on an international scale. European competitiveness is highly dependent on regions' competitiveness, and the ability to develop education, training and innovation at the regional level. |



Anna Bergdahl

Project Coordinator at the County Administrative Board in Östergötland, **Sweden**

AER: What is your role as lead partner in the YES project?

AB: Our region Östergötland has worked to promote entrepreneurship in schools for many years. The YES project allows us to make use of our experiences in this area. It also allows us to learn from the good practical work being done in other regions. As lead partner we have overall responsibility for reaching the goals envisaged by the project, and implementing the activities. We also set in place the necessary structures for administration, guide our partners in INTERREG rules and work closely with the European Commission. Besides, we work alongside our component leaders at the Council of Education, Training and Employment of the Region of Murcia, Spain, and Pori Regional Development Agency, Finland, to make the YES project successful.

AER: How can projects such as YES boost economic growth at a local level?

AB: We need more entrepreneurs in Europe. Young Europeans do not see entrepreneurship as a preferred career option. We can change the attitudes of our future adults by reviewing the policies in place in the school system, the one place that brings young people together. The main objective of YES is to create more positive attitudes among European youth. The best way of doing is through the school system. One way of reforming our education system is to map and review the policies that regulate schools. Interregional cooperation can help us learn about best practice examples from other regions, as well as informing alternative ways of working and how best to take on common challenges. YES will result in improved policies in its partner regions, which in the long run will contribute to boost the economic growth at local level. |



Jose Daniel Martín González

General Secretary of the CEEIM Business Innovation Centre in Murcia, **Spain**

AER: You are responsible for the communication around the YES project. What are the key tools you use to communicate its outcomes?

JDMG: We must account for internal and external communication in answering this question. Internally, we created an intranet where documents, presentations, and graphic material generated by YES partners are updated and uploaded. Externally, we kindly invite everyone to visit our project website: www.young-entrepreneurs.eu. We also formed regional reference groups among policymakers and key stakeholders who are influential in changing policies and implementing final action plans.

Furthermore, there will be open seminars, regional dissemination seminars, one EU-wide dissemination seminar organised by the AER, a closing conference which will take place in Brussels in 2012, and seven newsletters (we recently just launched our first). Promotional material has also been generated, and a magazine will be published at the end of next year.

AER: What can regional and local authorities do to promote innovation?

JDMG: A whole lot. Despite the global economy in which we live, there is an increased importance of place-specific and often non-economic factors in creating competitive advantage and differences between regional economic growth rate. As the academic Michael Porter argues, *"The enduring competitive advantages in a global economy lie increasingly in local things – knowledge, relationships, motivations."* |

Entrepreneurial vision

AER regions are setting the standard when it comes to promoting entrepreneurship education. Here, we look at what two regions are doing in the field



© Land Baden-Württemberg

Baden-Württemberg's
EntrepreneurTalent Club

BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG (D)

YOU only have to look at the global brands based there to see that entrepreneurship matters in Baden-Württemberg. With Mercedes-Benz, Porsche and Hugo Boss among the big names to have been developed in the southwest German region, it is clear that policymakers take the development of business acumen very seriously. Indeed, the economics and education ministries work together on several projects to promote entrepreneurship in young people, many of which are financed through the EU.

Petra Weinger, the project manager for Entrepreneurship Education in the initiative for start-up and business transfer at the economics ministry of Baden-Württemberg, says the region is keen to boost the number of entrepreneurs. *"It is important to start in providing pupils with entrepreneurial ways of thinking at school,"* she says. *"Whatever you do in an enterprise, you will need entrepreneurial thinking."* School in the post-WWII period was *"kind of closed up towards enterprise from the outside"*, she said, adding that schools were frightened of the influence of business. However, education is now *"much more open"*, with politicians aware of the link between economics, entrepreneurship and schools. *"We need to get the real world into schools,"* she says.

Specific projects to boost innovation include bringing bankers in to primary schools to discuss what entrepreneurship means, supporting mini-enterprises by providing contact points for pupils and teachers, and helping teenagers develop business plans to be presented to banks. One project that Weinger is particularly proud of involves providing pupils with professional direction. A so-called *"entrepreneurial talent check"* involves identifying and bringing together the region's most talented business brains. After tough tests and a one-hour interview, the 30 successful participants form a network of future entrepreneurs, receive training by regional experts and present their projects at various fairs and conferences. The aim is to provide practical support – including mentoring from experienced entrepreneurs – to help young people find and strengthen their talents. *"This will be a flexible, dynamic entrepreneurial talent club,"* Weinger says. |

NORDLAND (N)

Another region known for leading the way in entrepreneurship is Nordland in North Norway. Trud Berg, the executive of education at Nordland County Council, insists that *"young children and young people in our Region should be offered an education in innovation and entrepreneurship"*. This, she says, *"makes it possible for them to create their own enterprise in the future, and to develop their own creative skills"*.

Nordland is a sparsely populated area with all the challenges that it involves. At the same time Nordland has a lot of opportunities, e.g beautiful scenery perfect for developing tourism and an increasing export industry. The County Council has developed its own entrepreneurship strategy in order to help young people believe in themselves, and in the opportunities the county has to offer. The main goal is to get them to stay or get new people to move to the region. According to Berg, the focus is *"entrepreneurship from kindergarten enterprises to student enterprises"*.

Berg says that in the kindergartens the main issue is to stimulate entrepreneurial competences, such as the willingness and ability to take initiatives, innovation and creativity, willingness to take risks and to boost self-confidence. Further up in the education system, the council also focuses on these entrepreneurial competences, as well as the *"what, how and why"* involved in making youth enterprises.

In Nordland, some 25,000 pupils aged between 6 and 18 have had the opportunity to create their own enterprises during school time in the past five years. Each municipality is provided with funds from the county council, to make this possible. Research shows that pupils who are developing their own youth enterprise within school, in much larger scale than pupils that not have done this, decide to develop their own business when they get older. This is one of the reasons why the region finds entrepreneurship so important.

Students within higher education institutions also get the opportunity to set up their own student enterprises.

The teachers in Nordland, both in elementary and secondary schools, have had the opportunity to take higher training in entrepreneurship. The region has been developing expertise in this field, by teaching teachers at its local universities. Besides, it has been developing new knowledge through sponsoring targeted PhD-studies.

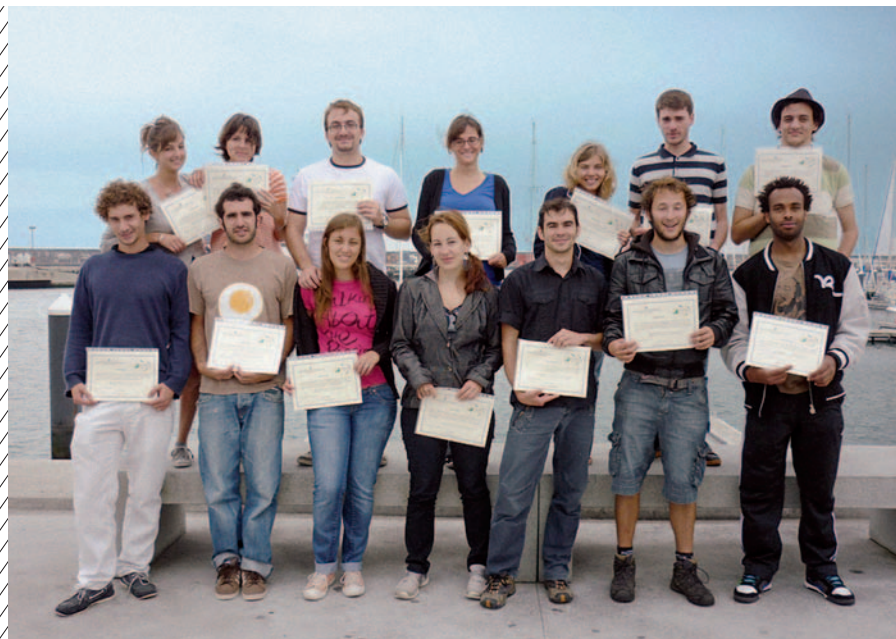
Both the entrepreneurial skills and the entrepreneurial personal qualities and attitudes are important in shaping the future of Nordland, Norway and Europe. As Berg says, *"Our goal is that the young ones through their entrepreneurial competence are able to see the opportunities in this county, and make them work."* |



Trud Berg, Executive
of education at Nordland
County Council

Linked in

AER's Eurodyssey programme provides rich opportunities for Europe's regions, businesses and young people



Presentation of the Eurodyssey's traineeship certificates in the Azores, July 2010

© Eurodyssey Azores - General Secretariat

More than 10,000 young people have benefited from the opportunities created by Eurodyssey since the programme was launched just over 25 years ago.

Fellow businessman Hugo Santos, from the Azores (P), aged 24, who was in Barcelona in 2009, said Eurodyssey can give young entrepreneurs "a sense of autonomy and contact with an unknown reality". Santos, who is now CEO of the Cubo events and marketing company, said, "Eurodyssey gives you a sense of teamwork that

"a sense of autonomy and contact with an unknown reality"

is really important. Companies are usually made up of groups of people, and in Eurodyssey you gain experiences in living with people you don't know. It also helps trainees to understand the need to adapt and make concessions to achieve personal and group objectives."



What started in 1985 as a small project based on the vision of Edgar Faure, the AER founding president, is now one of the Assembly's major assets. Faure launched the European Youth Tour (which later became Eurodyssey) to unleash the potential of young people, and foster the intercultural dialogue so crucial to a united Europe. Expanding the programme beyond his own Franche-Comté region (F), Faure was a strong believer in the capacity of the regions to develop their own initiatives.

While the founding principles still hold true, Eurodyssey – an AER exchange programme for partnerships between regional authorities, young people and companies – has now adapted to 21st century Europe. The project works by offering young European jobseekers the chance of a work experience placement abroad. Not only does the programme provide trainees with a rich cultural

experience, they also have the opportunity to learn a language and gain the professional skills that are so crucial in a tough market. "Eurodyssey has been able to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances whilst keeping its original identity," according to the programme's founding principles.

Break on through

The key objective of Eurodyssey is to provide professional experience for young people from various educational backgrounds. AER believes that working in other European regions can help young people to better adapt to the international labour market, something which is becoming increasingly important amid the pressures of globalisation. The traineeships are becoming more popular year on year, and in 2010 more than 582 18 to 30-year-olds took up a placement under Eurodyssey, in which they spent up to seven months based abroad.

Eurodyssey has the potential to provide a business boost to the regions. As an entrepreneur Rui Carreiro, the CEO of Publibooking, said, the project can help young businessmen and women confront the challenges – such as finding staff and capital resources – associated with setting up new businesses. "The Eurodyssey project has given me an opportunity to pick suitable and competent personnel from abroad. Under normal circumstances this would be far too expensive and even impossible since our market is so small," he said.

An experience of a lifetime

Then there are the potentially life-changing repercussions for the young people involved. French topography graduate David Ramos, who went to the Azores aged 27 under the programme in 2007, found the experience enriching, both professionally and in terms of quality of life. "I always wanted to work abroad," he said. Pablo Larrosa also went to the Azores aged 27 to increase his professional skills and practice law for the first time. Larrosa said he entered the programme because "I wanted to continue living abroad, to know other cultures and to have a professional experience in my working field".

For Portuguese trainee Andreia Tavares, who took up a position in Spain's Valencia region in 2009, the Eurodyssey experience is one not to be missed. He said, "This stage of my life will be forever remembered by the experience that the Eurodyssey programme provided me with. It has surely been a step ahead in terms of personal growth." He added, "I discovered new cultures, made new friends, learnt a new language. Spain will always be a great memory for me and I will take Valencia back in my heart. I seriously advise young people to enjoy this opportunity. Obviously, it isn't always a bed of roses. You will find some obstacles to overcome... but this is a challenge not to miss".]

Organigram Committee 3

Culture, Education, Youth and International Cooperation



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—Agenda 2011

Committee 3 Plenary Meeting

18 April

Orléans - Centre (F)

European Citizens' Forum "Youth Entrepreneurship Strategies"

18 April

Orléans - Centre (F)

Conference on Professional Youth Mobility

19 April

Orléans - Centre (F)

Youth Regional Network Spring Plenary Meeting

20 April

Orléans - Centre (F)

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Istanbul - Istanbul (TR)

Most Youth Friendly European Region Award 2011

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to 15th July**



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